





Epiphany

The Schuylkill Valley High School Literary Magazine

Volume Twelve

2019

Epiphany

The Schuylkill Valley High School Literary Magazine.

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Volume Twelve

2019

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Nonfiction

Jesulayomi Adejo -- 1st Place

Abigail Bentz -- 2nd Place

Rowan Angstadt -- 3rd Place

Honorable Mention: Hannah Phillips

Fiction

Lily Wiley -- 1st Place

Elizabeth Valeriano -- 2nd Place

Meghan Cook -- 3rd Place

Honorable Mention: Emily Zaharia

Poetry

Jesulayomi Adejo -- 1st Place

Isaiah Martinez -- 2nd Place

Rowan Angstadt -- 3rd Place

Honorable Mention: Lily Whitmoyer

Cassidy Rittenhouse

Art

Adriana Godfrey -- 1st Place

Megan Torok -- 2nd Place

Jay Poland -- 3rd Place

Honorable Mention: Lily Dang

Photography

Lily Whitmoyer -- 1st Place

Kara Faulk -- 2nd Place

Kaley Kauffman -- 3rd Place

Honorable Mention: Macy Zimmerman

Sandra Goho

Addison Angstadt

Nicollas Bernhardt

Epiphany

Hello, Reader,

I invite you to open these pages and recall what it was to be in high school: sweaty, and stressful, and maybe just a little bit fun. I do not ask these walls to tell their stories, because they have, and their product lies bound before you--first thought, then whispered, then scrawled on a page, before *Epiphany* could gather them into this volume.

There is something magical about the written word. I have loved reading since the summer after third grade and seeing my own writing, or the writing of my friends, neatly typed up and printed out has a certain romantic quality. Seeing poetry on a computer screen takes away some of its humanity, and I'll apologize now to every tree I've hurt for feeling this way. Sometimes when I'm in a big class or group and the topic of poetry arises, I'll pretend I don't enjoy it. Poetry has a kind of stigma among teenagers for being "lame" or "annoying". And at times, I feel the same. But at other times, I find a poem that is so clever and beautiful I can't help but want to shout it from the roof or graffiti it in a bathroom stall. Sometimes I hear a poem so powerful it makes me want to riot or dance. I really think if students could push past the fact that it's a required piece of curriculum, they'd see that it's a communication tool more powerful than essays or emails.

I don't mean to single out poetry as the only form of creative writing, but it does make up the majority of our magazine. As for short stories, whether realistic or fantastic, they teach a sort of control over language that DBQs do not. Creativity is such a valuable resource, and the funny thing is this: It's unlimited. Employers act like it's hard to come by, but the reality is that it just takes a little time and patience. So go ahead and spend some time reading the classics--they're classics for a reason. They'll teach you skills about language and expression that can only help you. And write for pleasure, as well. There's therapy in writing about yourself, even if not all of it is true.

Thank you to all of those who contributed to this magazine. It has been my pleasure to write for it every year I could, and it's my pleasure now to see it completed. Mrs. Kramer's guidance and expertise was integral to the entire operation. Although at times I had a feeling that the magazine was rather averse to its own creation, my fellow staffers and I managed to convince it otherwise, and it now lives despite itself. Furthermore, I know *Epiphany* would only be a figment of my imagination without the help of

Mr. Billman and our IT experts, and, of course the gracious Mr. Cullen and his graphic design team. I now invite you to enter this marketplace of creativity, where you might learn or be inspired by your peers.

Sincerely yours,

Meghan Cook '19, Editor-in-Chief

An Afternoon in the Oak Grove

Jesulayomi Adejo

1st Place Nonfiction

Underneath the afternoon sun lies a grove of lush grass and tranquil oak trees who stand tall despite centuries of rain and snow and storm. Fallen leaves rest on a park bench, stolen from their fathers by the wind that whips my hair all about. Beyond the hills lives a garden of sunflowers and daisies, roses and marigolds, pink peonies and red dahlias. Gray squirrels scurry into hidden alcoves while red-tailed hawks soar above the friendly oaks, searching for a nook to rest. A soft breeze blows through the trees and over the hills, cooling the atmosphere. All is well in the Oak Grove.

On the last day of July, I decide to leave the confines of my dorm and bask in the outdoors and warm weather. Maybe nature would inspire some lyrics — I was eager to finish the song that had been bumbling around my brain for weeks. Notebook in hand and ukulele slung over my shoulder, I embark on the not-so-arduous journey to reach the grove, climbing up hills, avoiding fallen leaves, swerving around patches of mud that threaten to soil my off-white sneakers. Along the way, I stop at the flower garden and pluck a few sunflowers to adorn my hair. Eventually, I reach a dry spot between the trees and lie against one, legs outstretched, fingers laced behind my head. It's quiet.

Here, an ineffable equilibrium exists that bonds all life together, and in this moment, I become the leaves on the ground, the grass beneath my feet and the ladybugs crawling across my hand. Above my head, I see the vast expanse of sky partially blocked by branches, and sunlight peeking through a break in the leaves. Another wind blows, and I hear the distinct rustling of grass blades and oak leaves, the silent songs of cicadas crescendoing to a forte. Lying in the Oak Grove underneath the centuries-old oak tree, forgotten notebook strewn across my lap, grass tickling my fingers and sunflowers woven in my braids, I close my eyes and smile.



My Infestation

Ann Davila

However long I think I have, it's always inaccurate.
Time crunches and crunches away at my brain
Like an infestation of aphids eating away at a garden.
Small holes start to form, then they grow and grow.
Holes in the amount of time I possess multiply
because of one word
One word that I refuse to say
One ladybug that I refuse to let enter my ill garden
And the ladybug's name is
"No."

Lily Dang

Honorable Mention

Changed

Macy Zimmerman

It's cold outside, when one night you ask,
 "How can I feel so good, yet be so sick?"
 A valid question,
 The world does not make much sense.
 This disease weaves its way through your body,
 Making you weak.
 Fragile.
 Vulnerable.
 I do not see you as any of those things.
 To me, you are strong.
 Steady.
 Invincible.
 The universe seems to punish those
 Who don't deserve it.

But I do believe in fate,
 And maybe that's what this is.
 Fate. Supposed to be.
 Then why is it that I feel
 Like I'm on a different planet?
 I am not normal anymore.
 That's why when I continue to walk the halls
 As if nothing has changed,
 I'm lying.
 I am changed.
 And forever will be.
 For now, I'll embrace time,
 Something naive me used to rush away.
 I'll hold on tight,
 Hoping that fate won't cause any more changes.

Hit or Miss:

An analysis¹ of the story behind the viral video

Rowan Angstadt

3rd Place Nonfiction

For weeks, the internet was flooded. As so many do, a simple video of a teen girl lip syncing went viral, prompting a wave of reposts, remixes, and recreations. This video, however, is more than just a viral sensation: it is a glimpse into the life of a girl struggling to find her way in life and in love.

Although the viral video² eventually migrated to other platforms, it was originally posted on the app TikTok, by user Nyannyancosplay³. TikTok, previously known as Musical.ly, is an app where users can record a video of themselves lip syncing or acting along to a song. Nyannyancosplay (hereafter referred to as "Nyan" for short) chose TikTok as her medium. Part of this decision was logistical: the app allowed her to create this video in a format that worked for her. She could take an existing song with a message she liked or wanted to share, and add her own twist with movements, facial expressions, characterization, and more. However, Nyan also chose TikTok as a medium for more narrative purposes. TikTok and its users are heavily criticized for being childish, cringey, or for showing little to no effort. Therefore, Nyan could post the video, knowing it wouldn't be taken seriously, and could thus hide its true meaning. Additionally, as many people do, she posted on social media, hoping that a certain person would see it, as she was too afraid to tell that person her feelings directly.

Viewers of the video will notice that Nyan is not wearing everyday clothes. She is actually cosplaying—dressing up as a character, usually from a video game or show. Nyan is dressed as Nico Yazawa, a character from the Japanese multimedia project *Love Live! School Idol Project*. Nyan's outfit is found only in the video game *Love Live! School Idol Festival*, however, *Love Live!* also consists of an anime, a movie, a manga⁴, and video games. Her outfit—a colorful cheerleading uniform—helps characterize her as friendly and cute. She is also likely trying to show off her figure in a nice outfit for that certain person.

The outfit isn't the only reason why Nyan chose this character for her video. The character, Nico Yazawa, is part of an idol group⁵. Throughout *Love Live!*, she and other girls sing and perform in order to raise money for their school. In the Japanese versions of the anime and video games, there are both direct and indirect references to relationships between the girls. Nico Yazawa in particular has very open and obvious references to her relationship with another female character. There was even a controversy over an English version of the game, where many of the homosexual subtext and references were removed in translation.⁶ Nyan picked this character for a reason— to help portray her feelings for her listener.

The song lyrics also play an important role in conveying Nyan's message. The excerpt used in the video is part of the verse of "Mia Khalifa," a song by hip hop duo iLOVEFRiDAY. The full song is vulgar and insulting, originally being written as a 'diss track'⁷ against the titular woman, Mia Khalifa, a former porn star. The excerpt Nyan chose for her video is somewhat less insulting, focusing instead on the unfaithfulness of the listener's boyfriend. The listener in this case, however, isn't just anyone— Nyan posted this video with the specific goal of reaching a certain person. She is trying to convince this someone to leave her boyfriend for Nyan.

Supporting this is the fact that accompanying the line, "He gon' find another girl and he won't miss ya'!" in the song, Nyan does a certain hand sign— the "I love you" sign. The sign is a combination of the sign language letters "i", "l", and "y". This combination of lyrics and sign shows a subtle message— 'he may not love you, but I will.' She also smiles and dances throughout the video, trying to look happy and inviting.

This may seem like a stretch— after all, the song is incredibly insulting to the listener. However, the tone is easily explained by another aspect of Japanese culture. In many animes and mangas, there is a character categorized as "tsundere"— someone who acts cold or hostile, but actually cares for another character whom they pick on. This fits perfectly with Nyan's attitude— her words are harsh and insulting, but her actions show that she really cares about the listener.

Nyan thought out each and every aspect of her video in order to send exactly the message she wanted. From a platform that could disguise her true meaning from all but her intended audience, to a character with canonical gay relationships; from a song that perfectly fulfills the "tsundere" character model to the loving movements that accompanies it-- Nyan crafted the meaning of her video to give her the best chances of succeeding. She wanted to send a message to a girl, a message that she would love her when her boyfriend never did. This video is not an insulting diss track, nor a simple lip sync, but rather a story of a young lesbian in an unrequited love, trying to convince her hopeful girlfriend to return her message of love.

Footnotes—

1. Tongue in cheek— "intended to be understood as a joke, although often seeming serious". Definition from Cambridge dictionary.
2. Video can be found here: <http://bit.ly/nyannyanhitormiss>
3. Nyannyan cosplay (found on Instagram and TikTok)
4. Manga— Japanese comics

5. Idol group— Groups popular in Japan made of "manufactured" pop stars who create music and have a very controlled public image

6. Diss track— a song written to insult or make fun of another person
Read more about the controversy here: <http://bit.ly/nyannyancontroversy>



Allora Fernandez

Time With Dad

Abigail Bentz

2nd Place Nonfiction

The Labor Day morning was foggy. A mist so thick that it collected on every surface. The 4:00 a.m. trek to the duck blind was eerie and silent because of the dense atmosphere. This Labor Day would start unlike any I've had before, dark, dreary and quiet, just the sound of our boots in the soggy grass. I felt so excited because this was the first time I wasn't just an observer. This was my moment. It was finally time to use the skills I learned after successfully completing the Pennsylvania Game Commission hunter safety course online. The course took a month with dozens of questions on dozens of topics. After passing the test, I finally had my license. Now I could hunt with my dad in the fields and actually participate instead of just sitting there. I was nervous but ready to shoulder a gun, just like my father, standing by his side as a partner and not just a guest.

My dad and I loaded the truck the night before with our decoys, shotguns, rounds of ammunition and supplies as we headed to Oley where one of our buddies was waiting for us. We reached the destination, and we set up in the goose blind. As we got settled in, everything started to feel real to me. Anticipation gave way to reality and the adrenaline started flowing. This really was happening, and I was ready to be part of my father's hunting endeavors and in the off-season, part of the stories told at gatherings. The decoys and the pond became visible as dawn broke and the sun started to rise. I knew it was soon going to be my time to shine, my moment of truth. The excitement was as thick as the humid air.

We heard geese in the distance but were unable to see them because of the fog. My father started to call, using the very same call he used when he was sixteen. He had carved his initials into it forty-two years ago. Their honks got louder and louder, but still we could not see them because of the thick mist. I started preparing for the first goose to come in. Eventually it broke through the fog, not the flock we heard but a single, lone goose heading right for our spread of decoys. All eyes were on me as I raised the shotgun to my shoulder. Time froze. It was in range, flying left to right. All my lessons and advice flashed through my head in a moment. I knew I had to get it, but I was very nervous.

My dad stopped calling and whispered, "It's all you kid. You can do this." I took the chance and aimed and fired. As I was pulling the trigger, I didn't think that I could get it. It all happened so quickly, it surprised me when it fell out of the sky. I originally thought that I missed. Fortunately, my dad recorded it on his phone. My dad was really proud of me, especially considering that it was the first time I had ever shot a shotgun at a moving target. The chances that I would actually make the shot were very slim, but I pulled it off.

I was so happy that I had the opportunity to go on this hunt with my dad. He showed me the ropes and made sure I had the opportunity to get my first goose. Now I can't wait for my future endeavors in hunting. As we left, he took the call off his neck, placed it around mine and kissed my head. He said, "Someday, I hope your daughter will use this."

Mixed up Nursery Rhymes

Kaitlyn Fell

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
To fit her princess a ballgown
So she could roam the town.

She shed some tears
For many, many years.
When she finally awoke,
She became fairly broke.

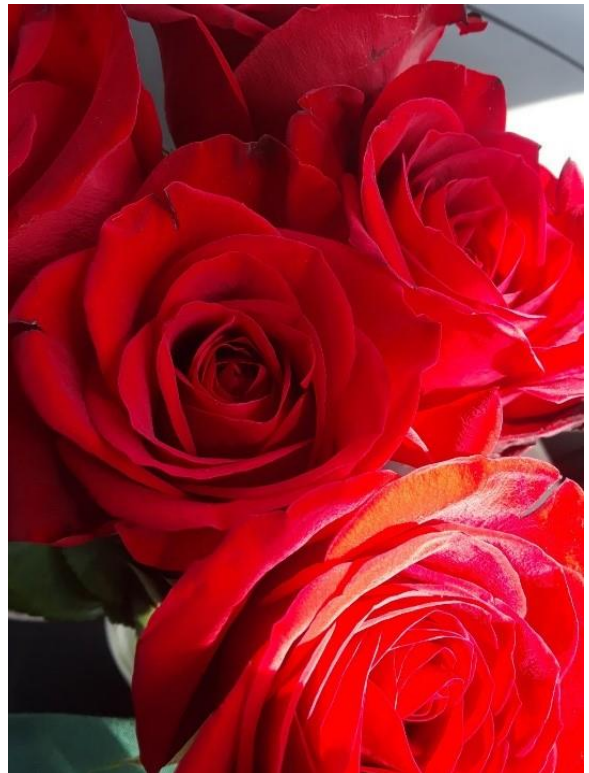
To pass the time
She made up a rhyme.
"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall."

Rumpelstiltskin told everyone what he wanted to hold
"A baby, a baby. That is what I want to hold," he told.
So the baker always made a cake
That the baby always takes.

My Dearest

Rylee Mann

To whom it may concern,
How do people learn?
Aren't we supposed to learn from our mistakes?
Yet all we ever hear is "Don't do this, don't do that"
How are we supposed to learn if we never get the opportunity?
Keeping me from what the world is capable of won't stop me from learning.
It won't stop me from discovering that the world is a dark place.
Full of weapons, drugs, death, adultery.
It's everyone for themselves.
But without discovering the lows, how am I supposed to find the highs?
The feeling of riding a bike without training wheels for the first time,
Or when you get your first car.
That feeling of freedom,
Or even the feeling of falling in love.
All that the world has to offer for me.
I know all you want to do is protect me, my well-being, my heart.
But the longer I'm held back, the more pressure that's added, the greater the explosion becomes.
Life is about trust.
Teach me what you can.
Teach me all you know.
Trust yourself.
You've taught me well.
I know how to handle myself.
I'll explore the world,
And if in the process I get hurt,
I'll learn.
I WILL LEARN.
...
Just let me learn.
-Yours truly



Kaley Kauffman

What's in A Name

Hannah Phillips

Honorable Mention

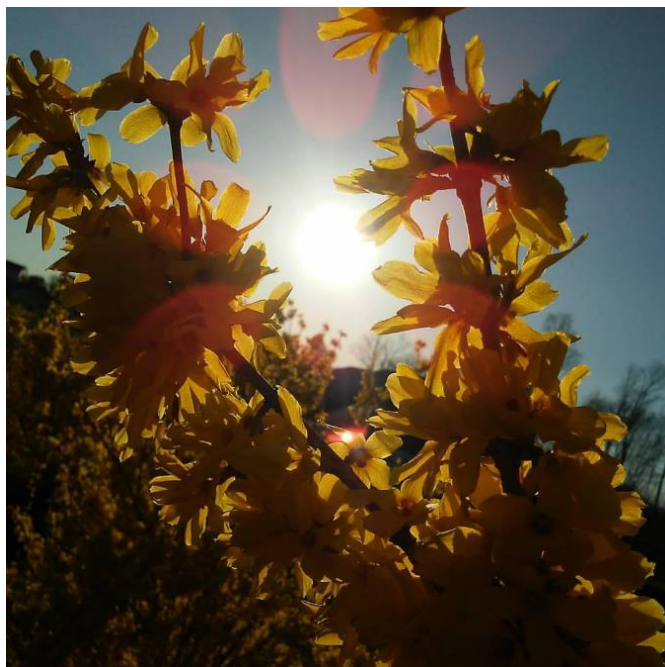
Have you ever sat back and really considered the power your parent holds when assigning you a name? It's hard to believe how the concept of a name is defined. This definition simplistically states that a name is a word or set of words by which a person, animal, place, or thing is known, addressed, or referred to. This definition does not sufficiently allude to the deeper meaning within a name. A name is not just some meaningless word. Each and every name has a story. Some names hold stigmas and stereotypes. Some names carry on legacies and traditions. Some names even spark controversies. Within each and every name, there is so much more than letters.

Sometimes parents get caught up in the preparations for having a child and even completely forget to consider the name. In instances like this, the mother or father will take one look and immediately latch upon a name. They will miraculously know, either from signs around them, from the appearance of the baby, or just from a gut feeling. However, this name, chosen on impulse, will continue to convey strong meaning and elicit interpretation from others. In any case, there will usually be a reason, or a story, behind a name.

Have you ever met someone named after a loved one within their own family? The chances that you have are plenty. Quite a few people prefer family names; They long to keep the spirit of a particular individual alive, and they do so by incorporating that person's name into another's. More often than not, these are the types of names that elicit the greatest emotions and responses. Sometimes parents will even claim that their precious child is watched or guarded by a particular guardian angel, their namesake, protecting them from Heaven. Every name holds plenty of meaning; however, carrying the name of a deceased loved one is far more emotional and touching.

Sadly, some names are also held in very negative regard. Believe it or not, there are people out there actually trying to name their children "Hitler." Names based upon evil individuals stigmatize and may stereotype that individual. Along with names being historically frowned upon, some can also come across as straight up weird. Take *Britney Shakira Beyoncé* for example. Don't rub your eyes. This name actually belongs to a person. Her parents were huge fans of these three singers and couldn't decide whom to name their daughter after. As a result, they named her Britney Shakira Beyoncé. One more poor parenting decision resides in the choosing of "Abcde". Believe it or not, there are 328 people in the United States named Abcde, the majority being girls. Trust me, I am just as confused as the next person. Parents must remember that the name they choose will reside with that person forever. Why would people purposely risk the well-being of their child for a controversial name? These names often lead to hurtful nicknames, bullying, and can even affect personality. Sometimes they will see their name as a shoe that they need to fill.

Each and every name holds meaning and a story. Names pour the foundation of a life, names can mold particular individuals, and names hold dear value. Now, take the time to consider - what if the world would be without names?



Michael Herman

(Am) I (Am)

Anonymous

I am selfish.
 Life has given me much more than needed:
 Stable mind, stable family, stable job, stable
 relationship, stable future,
 Large house, large bed, large bank account, large
 friend group,
 Yet I still complain.
 “School is killing me”
 “All I ever get is pressure”
 “My grades are down”
 “Why won’t life take a break”
 Why aren’t I happy?
 Does wanting more make me a bad person?
 Or...

Am I selfish?
 Life has given me much more than needed:
 Stable mind, stable family, stable job, stable
 relationship, stable future,
 Large house, large bed, large bank account, large
 friend group,
 Yet I still strive for more.
 “I’m going to savor school”
 “Give me more pressure, it’s all opportunity”
 “My grades will be top of my class”
 “Take it all of your life in, you only get one”
 Why aren’t I happy?
 Because until I finally fulfill myself in what I’ve
 succeeded,
 Only then will I truly find joy.

Glass Tombstones

Jayden Dennis

Serene was the graveyard, the blue jay perched atop the pine singing its solemn song of woe. Rarely anyone stopped by church nowadays, let alone the graveyard to pay their respects to the deceased residing there. Bouquets of flowers that were scattered amongst the glass graves were now rotted into the soil of the earth, and the only visitor to the dead wasn’t even death itself. An elderly man, leaning his cane beside him as he sat upon the crumbling stone bench, gazed longingly at the horizon, pondering about his mistakes yet again. Pull yourself together, he thought, grown men don’t cry. She wouldn’t want me to cry.

The wind drifted through the trees, sending a chill down the man’s spine. The gray sky sitting above him seemed to taunt the man, sending a small ray of light onto the blue tombstone in front of him. The light refracted, scattering fragments of beautiful blue from the glass. Blue was her favorite color. She always had some of it on her; be it a bracelet, socks, earrings. It certainly was blue the day she died, but not the variation she’d have wanted. Melancholy, it certainly set the mood that November day.

Sometimes you just have to let go. The man sighed and allowed his cane to fall at his feet, with the malnourished morning glories drooped over in a defeated manner. The foggy breath exiting the man’s mouth slowed, and a smile formed at his lips. He could see it. Her. Reaching out one last time, he grasped that same delicate hand with the blue nail polish at which he did so all those years before. This time, he pulled.

Like a Quilted Blanket

Emma Ertel

As I wandered down the path, the cool wind consoled me like a quilted blanket. The warm colored leaves swirled around me like a tornado. I walked in silence, mesmerized by the beauty of the woodland. Nightingales entertained me with their melodies, not knowing any worries of the world. In the distance, sudden sparkles of headlights demanded my attention, gleaming through the thick brush. I stopped, apprehensive of the path ahead of me, but soon the reflexious gazes dwindled into the darkness. Realization dawned upon me as I heard the faraway bells chime twelve. I turned, contemplating, aware of the nocturnal beasts hiding under the surface. I tried to head back, but soon I found my feet ignoring my wishes. The soft crackling sound soothed my discomfort as my high tops scraped the jagged floor beneath me. I was no longer fearful, but calm as I grew deeper into the whistling trees. I may have been walking minutes or hours, for which I could not tell the difference. The same synchronized pulse fell beneath my feet, molding me into an unbreakable pattern. It was only when my ears grew mindful of the crunching ahead, that my gaze broke and my footsteps staggered. I lingered wearily, muffling my uneven gasps. Soon enough the sound disintegrated, and I found myself tiptoeing thoughtlessly across the thicket floor. Then, all at once, my world was spinning, twirling like an upside down roller coaster. The dense bramble grazed my skin, causing my face to tingle and my eyes to tear. Suddenly, the mucky dirt was my sky, and the stars were the gravel beneath me. I clawed at whatever was holding me, but my tense fists punched nothing more than the wavering breeze. My vision went blank as my head smacked a broad boulder. The murky darkness challenged me, preventing me from seeing the path ahead. Abruptly, my limp body scraped against fabric, allowing me to comprehend the smoothness of seat covers. I squinted hopelessly as two wounded hands tied me to the narrow floor. I vaguely heard a diesel engine rumble, and soon the sound of tires on pebbles alarmed me. My eyes bounced open and closed, still dazed from the vivid pain. I gradually let my eyelids shut, allowing the warm heater to console me, like a quilted blanket.

Naked Trees

Emily Zaharia

In the hallowing light of the morning
Trees
Through which golden sun emits rays,
Trees, now barren of their leaves,
Stand in the cold, merciless earth,
Stand in the wavering wind.

The tangled ropes of its hair
The dry, unwanted tufts,
Strings and cords pulled together
And twisted
And knotted,
A circuit of wires
And endless roads and rivers
And long, gnarly fingers,
Claws even,
Abnormally bent,
A naked body
Stripped of its coat.

And treasures unfold,
Roots which cling to the sky
For dear life,
Candied vines
Uprooted
And upturned,
A still shot of lightning
In action,

Each branch extending,
Journeying different paths,
Different directions
Riding different sounds of the world,
Fractals upon fractals

Hands and fingers lingering in the air,
Reaching toward Heaven,
Clawing at its door,
Unable to reach,
To touch,
Forever cemented in its home .

Everything Ends Eventually

Kaley Kauffman

Our love was so strong, it was going to last for years and years and years. It was supposed to be never-ending. But everything must come to an end. Whether it is school, love, or even life, everything must end.

We were supposed to have children and watch them grow into amazing, successful humans. We were going to buy a home and even own pets together. I never once thought that we wouldn't have the chance to do any of this, we didn't even get to grow old together. I thought for sure we'd be together till the very end, but things can't always go the way we want them to.

When I got the call saying that you were in the hospital, I lost it. I fell to the cold, hard floor and sobbed. Terrible thoughts kept running through my mind, and I couldn't get them to stop. I knew I had to get up and drive to the hospital, but I was frozen, stuck to the floor. After ten minutes of tears flowing from my eyes, I found the strength to get up and go to the hospital. However, there was no way to prepare myself for what I was about to hear.

"Mrs. Muller, your husband has passed away. I am so sorry, there was nothing we could do to help him," the doctor said.

My whole world froze. Everything felt as if it were going in slow motion. I was in shock to the point where I couldn't even cry anymore. My heart was broken. All I wanted was to go home and be alone. Weeks have gone by, and I still cannot cope with what has happened. I feel so alone. It is so hard to sleep at night by myself and wake up in the morning, thinking you'll be next to me when you never will be again. I feel as if I have lost my entire life, my love, and my heart. What was supposed to be a lifelong love has come to an end, because everything ends eventually.

To You, My Sweet Moon

Lily Whitmoyer

Honorable Mention

As I drive toward you,
I notice the deep dimples
Indented in your gray face.

The sun's light reflects off you,
A flashlight illuminating the earth,
Forming a path for the insomniacs,
Brightening the dreaded night.
Little, duller flashlights shine next you,
Accompanying you on your nightly outing,
Inspiring the dreamers,
Captivating creators.
The little flashlights will lose their battery;
Their light will vanish,
But your battery never dies.

I drive faster,
Closer,
To your perfectly rounded body.
Closer,
To the halo glow surrounding you.
Yet you remain distant.

I continue to watch you,
For I am afraid you will disappear,
A game of hide and seek
Behind a cloud.
I know the sun must rise,
And you will visit another.
So, for these short nighttime hours,
I admire you.

My car stops before a cliff;
I found you.
If I reach out,
Perhaps I could touch you.
So I stretch,
Closer,
Almost colliding,
Closer,
Practically touching.
Your vastness swallows me.

Beyond Control

Lillian Wiley

1st Place Fiction

My hands trembled as I placed my fingers over the planchette. I looked to my brother, Andrew, who was sitting on the floor as far away from the board as he could. Paranoia streaked his face, yet he had agreed to be my witness. I flashed him an uneasy smile, and he shifted uncomfortably.

“Can we just get this over with? That board scares me,” he whined.

“Fine,” I sighed, “But you’re staying until the end, right?”

“Not by choice,” he mumbled.

Feeling slightly comforted by his presence, I began the game. I’d never played alone before, and my nerves were evident in my sweaty palms and quivering breath. Quietly, I wiped my palms on the white bedsheets before I prayed the Summoning and opened the door to any possible communications.

“Is anyone there?” I asked, my voice a little shaky. “Does anyone have a message for us?”

The planchette moved slightly at first, then shot like a bullet to “YES.” My fingers felt almost numb, like I wasn’t completely in control of them.

“Could you tell me your message?”

The planchette rocketed to “NO.” Chills crept up my arms, but I played along.

“Then could you tell me your name?”

The planchette crept along the alphabet, filling me with a little hope.

“Z O Z O Z O Z O...” the planchette began to race between the letters and grew hot.

“Zo?” I asked, unease washing over me.

The planchette stopped, then began to move over the alphabet again. I tried to decipher what it was saying, relaying everything to Andrew.

“Delilah!” Andrew’s voice was panicked. “It’s just moving in figure eights.”

“It’s fine, I can control it,” I assured him, not quite convincing myself.

With terror pulsing through my body, I pressed down on the planchette and stopped Zo from moving it.

After a sigh of relief, I began my questioning again.

“Are you a good spirit?”

The planchette slowly crawled to “YES.”

“Are you lying to me?”

The planchette moved off of “YES” before moving right back to where it began.

“Are you a spirit?” The question itself scared me, yet I still found it leaving my lips.

The planchette inched ever so slowly to “NO.” My heart skipped a beat, and my stomach felt hollow. The dim room spun around me, and my head felt full of cotton.

“Delilah!” Andrew yelled, pointing at me, “Your nose!”

“Huh?” I mumbled, pulling my fingers off the planchette to touch my face. I pulled my hands away and caught sight of fresh blood.

“The planchette!”

Andrew leaped towards me, hands stretched out for the board. I looked to where the board lay on the bed, terror seizing me at the sight. The planchette raced around the board, scribbling figure eights in its wake.

“Goodbye!” I screamed, attempting to drag the planchette to the bottom of the board.

My hands were inches from the board when the lights in the small room burnt out. Andrew screamed and I covered my head as the glass bulbs popped and remnants of them flew through the air.

Then, a thick silence blanketed the space.

“Andrew?” I whispered, almost afraid to break the silence.

“Yeah?” He responded, voice quaking.

“Where are you?” Tears began to burn my eyes. My head pounded relentlessly. What had I done?

“Near the door,” He whispered back.

“Okay,” I swallowed and wiped my nose, “I’m coming.”

“Follow the taps,” he said. A loud knock sounded throughout the room, shaking me to the core. Still, I followed the sound in search of my brother.

Finally, I managed to crawl to the door through the glass sheeted carpet. My fingers and knees stung from the millions of minuscule slashes in my body.

“Andrew?” I called out.

Silence.

“Andrew?” I called a little bit louder.

Nothing. I began to blindly feel around the room for him. My fingers reached nothing but walls, furniture, and glass.

“Andrew!?” I began to cry, my breathing erratic. I raced back to the door and began searching for the doorknob.

“No!” I screamed as my hands scratched at nothing.

My panicked sobs overwhelmed me and reduced me to a withered heap on the ground. The suffocating scent of sulfur filled the air. My head was full of helium and each of my cries felt weaker and weaker. Suddenly, a bright light flashed before my eyes, like the birth of a star, before complete darkness consumed me.

The Toad

Anthony Gentile

There once was a toad
Who sat on a mushroom stool
By the side of the road.
There was a small pool
Where there were plenty of prey,
But there was one large and quick fly
Which the toad would chase all day.
When the day passed and it got dark,
The toad stopped chasing the fly and looked away
And realized that several days have passed
With nothing to show for his efforts but an empty stomach.

Awake or Asleep?

Ann Davila

Eyes closed forever,
Then suddenly opened.
The pill bottle waiting on the table —
Open the gates,
Grab onto the few that are necessary,
Cleanse your mind with them,
Look at your family pictures,
Swallow your spit,
Wake.



Allora Fernandez

Wrinkles
Emily Zaharia
Honorable Mention

There is a door. It is the kind of door you would glance at and never remember again. My curiosity still begs me to open it, though.

I creep closer to the door, anxious but hopeful. I grip the handle of the door, and the icy-like exterior of it sends goosebumps climbing up my arms. I shake them off but hesitate before turning the handle.

What lies behind this door? A secret entrance to a magical garden? A room filled to the very top of golden treasures? A serial killer, knife in hand, ready to pounce at the moment I open the door?

I turn the handle slowly and peer through the split inch of space I have made between the door and its frame. A bright light emerges from the room. It recedes, so I open the door further. I enter a large, white room. In it is an art gallery of some sort.

I walk to the first image on the wall and notice a fairly familiar person. The picture consists of a somewhat ancient man whose hair is but only tufts of clouds gripped to the very sides of his bald head and whose hands are blanketed in soft creases and folds. He lies on a bed in a cerulean gown. I can smell it, in my head only, but it is still so real. The stale aroma of the hospital combined with the redolent scent of latex gloves and hand sanitizer moves me to subtle tears for I remember what the future holds. In my head, a movie of my memories play. The scene of this dying man is slowly pulled back through the window of a small door. A young girl in pigtails sits anxiously on a stool, silently observing the man's death on the opposite side of the door.

A portly woman, the mother of the child, approaches the door and turns the handle.

"Why don't you say goodbye to Granddad, now?" she inquires. "Please."

The petite girl does not answer. Instead, she shakes her head, rather violently, and proceeds to watch him take his final breaths through the door.

If I think about it long enough, I can still envision the tears cascading down her round and puffy cheeks; they taste of salt and sorrow. I taste it all the time.

I was that girl who could not bring herself to say goodbye that day. If I did, I was afraid he would truly die.

Eternity stained the time and his breaths were short now. Then, there was a final exhale, and he was gone. Forever.

A couple minutes later, the mother, silently grieving, ambles out the door and instantly pulls the hand of the little girl.

"He said to tell you," she sniffs, "that he loves you."

I did not cry that day. I do not like to cry. However, despite my overall impassive demeanor, I can taste cold drops of tears while they roll down my quivering chin.

As I make my way to the next image, I pass many more canvases, each possessing a memory I refuse to think about. I shuffle slowly to the second image.

I recoil from the picture. It is an image of a girl. She could have easily been sixteen or seventeen, though, she was often mistaken for an age reasonably younger. In this picture, however, her explicit beauty has escaped, which is a result of the shredded cord tied around her neckline.

Her neck is ghostly pale under her chin, but her face is a rather unpleasant visage to put into words. I can see her struggling, in my mind only. You could almost see the fear in her crystal-gray eyes as she backs herself into a corner, helpless. Vulnerable. Afraid.

She had been a radiant, young woman. In fact, the woman in the picture, cowering in the corner of her attic, all bruised and bloodied and cut, rope in her hand and knife in the other, was alive at one point in time.

She was incredibly bright and talented; she had obtained the highest grades in the entire student body, always received awards for her intelligence, and created and ran the Voice and Thought, our official school newspaper and club. She was adored by the entire teacher staff.

Still, it was not enough.

During the last several months before the graduation ceremony, she was asked to write and read a commencement speech for the commemoration. She never arrived, of course.

I turn my attention back to the picture, but as soon as I do, my thoughts wander and the movie in my head resumes.

Another girl takes a punch to her face, resulting in an utterly revolting sound from her nose bone rupturing. The other girls in the room began a chant and screamed vulgar obscenities at the girl. They mocked her clothes and hair, intelligence and rhetoric.

"You should have never come to this school!"

"No one wants you here! Can't you see? You have no friends!"

"Go away and never come back!"

“Or better yet, you should just kill yourself!”

There I am. I can see myself in the corner of the locker room, lingering. I am obviously interested in the situation, but cautious as well. I open my mouth to speak, but decide to walk away. It was the last time I saw her alive.

I should have said something. If only. I should have told a teacher, my parents, anyone. Bystander. That is who I was. Now she is gone.

I turn away from the image and cover my eyes with my hands, like a horse with blinders. Despite my attempt to shield my eyes, I see another picture with my peripheral vision. It is of a little girl, probably four or five. I cannot look away now. Her eyes are concealed with two fairly large patches of tape and cotton. Yes, I knew her. She is my baby sister. However, she is not as young anymore.

The memory reveals itself like a movie playing in my head.

A 2011 silver-gray Toyota on the highway drives at seventy miles an hour. A little girl sits in the backseat squealing the lyrics to “Jessie’s Girl” on the radio while her older sister anxiously begs her to lower her voice. The little girl looks out of the window and sees an elderly couple holding each other’s gloved hands. She told me in excruciating detail. It is the last thing she had ever seen. It was the saddest thing I have ever heard. The car came to a stop. Glass breaks, lights flash, and her head cocks back into an awkward posture while her mouth opens wider to let out a revolting scream of complete fear.

I see her now at home. The patches were removed, of course. She still cannot see out of her left eye. She is much older now, but she is still using the stick to help her navigate around the house.

I am released from my thoughts and suddenly feel the urge to run. In any direction, it did not matter. All the while, my thoughts become my darkest enemy.

You should have told someone. Run.

She could have still been here. Keep running.

You should have told your grandfather that you loved him. I kept running.

Why did you not stop the car? A little more.

I kept running until my legs gave out, and my bones seemed to snap from under me. The excruciating pain forced me to limp for the remainder of the journey. I could not outrun my regretful life. Most of all, I could not forget.

I passed many other canvases of regret; the time I let the back door open and my dog escaped. The day I destroyed my winning art piece in a feat of anger. The moment I told my family I hated them and ran away. One by one, the memories flooded back into me. I was sinking into my regret. I was buried and burdened with these memories.

When I finally reached a door labeled “EXIT,” I pushed it open.

There was nothing, except a pitch-black room. In the center was a beautifully furnished, mahogany wood coffin. Its door was closed but I still felt my heart pound. *Dum. Dum. Dum. Dum. Dum. Dum. Dum.*

I was strangely intrigued by the coffin; it was remarkably attractive. I swallowed a huge pang of guilt and grief. I was supposed to despise this coffin.

As I neared it, I acquired the strangest feeling in my hands. It was as if someone was tickling them, but I never felt anything quite like this sensation before. It started in my hands and traveled through the rest of my body.

I touched my face and discovered that my dry skin was extremely chafed. Under my nose was a flab of extra elastic-like skin bouncing when I walked. I felt an indescribable pain in my back and my teeth started to weaken somehow. My eyesight grew fairly dim as well.

The feeling swelled considerably, so I finally looked down at my hands. They were smooth and spotty but nowhere near the young hands I had a few moments ago. My nails were darkened around the inner edges and my veins were streams of water protruding greatly from the surface of my hands. I felt all the guilt I acquired during my life boil in my heart. I was baking in my own conscience.

The heat. I could not take the heat. Stop it! Now! Get it away! I cannot take it anymore!

I clawed at my chest with my short, brittle nails and shredded the skin below my neck. My chest broke and my heartbeat slowed. *Dum. . . Dum. . . Dum. . .*

The coffin opened.

The Ghost

Rowan Angstadt

We have been haunted
by a living ghost.
Crying, screaming, slamming doors
the ectoplasm of spit in my face
the punches that didn't leave a bruise,
but hurt my skin and my soul.
Words and words and words,
thrown about like bullets of hatred
and even now, so many still lie embedded
in me.
Salt, iron, exorcism,
nothing seems to free us
from this storm, this poltergeist
It spins and rages and tears through our
home
Nothing can stop it
We can only flee,
And hope it does not follow.



Adriana Godfrey
1st Place Artwork

Heartbreak

Lillian Wiley

My heart has broken twice:
Once for my first love,
And once for the man who raised me.
My first love was silly;
With wool over my eyes, I dove in
And wholeheartedly gave up my Soul for a man
Who could not commit his gaze to me,
Like a dog begging for any scraps he could snag.
My father, on the other hand,
Loved me with all of his Heart,
Yet was blinded by Rage
Until sirens bound him
And my cries shackled him.

Outcast

Aiden Gensure

Like salt among sugar,
A goose among peacocks,
You always feel
As if you stand out.

It's seen by no one else.
Noticed only by you,
But it's pervasive,
Affecting every movement,
Every action,
Every waking moment.
Is captured by the fantasy
That you must learn to fit in,
That you must change.

Though your efforts are futile,
Like a puzzle piece that never quite fits.

And where is the problem in that?
Don't make yourself fit
The trends of others.
Make a trend
For others to fit.

False Truth

Aiden Gensure

Why do you question the elders old
And the youthful young,
The blessed bold
And the cursed hung?
Why do you question?
Why do you pry?

You try to make clear
The world of dye;
But in the act,
You muddle and smear,
Blurring the line of false and fact.
You create and distort,
Accuse and “report,”
Shameless all the while.
Through others’ hurt
Your wealth is gained.
Through your effort
The truth remains unattained.



Macy Zimmerman

Hi, Ma! This One’s About You!

Meghan Cook

3rd Place Fiction

I woke up sweating to my alarm. It was 4:30 and I had to run and then shower and then go to work. I’d had that nightmare again. The one about my old house. I got out of bed and quickly pulled on the clothes I’d left out the night before. Was it my third or fourth house? Some of them blurred together. I tied my shoes with already numb fingers and quietly hurried down the steps. I had always blamed my dad for making us move all the time; each dig somehow worse than the last, but now I wonder if it was partially because of my mom. It doesn’t seem like she can stay in one place for more than a few years.

When I opened the doors, I closed my eyes for a few seconds. It was still dark out, and the sun wouldn’t rise for another two hours at least. The house from my nightmare probably wasn’t even the worst place we lived, there was always the one where the backyard was filled with rusty needles that my sister and I would play with. One time, mom saw us and we moved out less than a month later.

I clicked on my headlamp and followed the shaking white spotlight down the driveway, to the left, across the bridge, and down an alley. The nightmare was always the same: I’d come home from school, I’d open the door to the two-story row home, and the dark hallway would stretch before me. I had lived there when I was six or so, and it was one of the houses that didn’t have working electric. My dad would buy cheap, nearly condemned houses, fix them up a bit, and sell them for a profit. Since money was tight, we had to live in the house while he was making the repairs, which none of us greatly enjoyed.

After a few rhythmic miles of my feet on the pavement, I could feel my hands again, and I came to the head of a trail. I took it three times a week, and although I preferred it in the afternoon I just didn’t have time this week. In my dream, I would walk down the corridor, and it would be dark and far longer than reality, and on each side were dozens of doors. I’d look at them and each one would fill me with dread, but I knew that I’d have to open one of them. The trail ended and the sky already seemed to lighten, although I could have just imagined it. Sometimes I would open a door and it would be my dad handing me a gun, or my cousin Mark flipping off his bike after an arrow was shot between the spokes, or my face in the mirror after an ice-skating accident had pushed a tooth through my lip. The scenes were never as bad as the trepidation leading up to the moment of release.

Home again, I turned off my headlamp and walked under the glow of my own porch light. I unlocked my front door and tried to think of better times. My sister playing the cello, my grandfather’s paintings, my mom’s handmade Halloween costumes.

And, I reminded myself, now.

Wax Sun

Elizabeth Valeriano

2nd Place Fiction

“This is beautiful; it has such raw emotion. I see why you are sometimes referred to as a god of poetry,” Eros grinned, looking up at Apollo with a twinkle in his eyes.

“It is raw emotion. I wrote it about someone,” he mumbled, suddenly really engrossed in the snail crawling across the ground. He knew he said too much right then.

“Wait, who? Who broke your heart? You have to tell me! I promise I won’t tell anyone! I pinkie promise... with a cherry on top!”

Eros was already too close for Apollo’s liking, hands on his shoulders, forcing them to look at each other, eye to eye. Even if the sun god refused, there was no way he would be able to avoid Eros forever.

Apollo sighed dejectedly. “If you tell anyone, I promise I will rip your wings off, okay?” He waited until Eros gave a vigorous nod while taking a step back, bouncing on the balls of his feet.

“It’s... well, it’s Icarus.”

He had never felt quite as sad as this before, but the people who knew could not comfort him. The people who didn’t wouldn’t understand. All Apollo had left was his poetry, in which he spilled countless feelings for far too long.

Apollo hadn’t noticed at first, how a human stole glances at him. It took an eternity of pining for Apollo to catch the boy, blushing and turning away. Suddenly, the sun wanted to know everything about the human. He left notes, poems, and charms around during the night for the other to find in daylight. It’s unclear when Apollo fell in love; maybe it was after weeks of learning about Icarus, maybe it was when their eyes met for a second during a stolen look, or maybe it was fate, and they had always been in love. Regardless of when it was, they were undeniably in love.



Sandra Goho

Honorable Mention

They could only be close during a short time of night, when the sun already set and the ocean slept. Poseidon was a greedy, angry man. If he knew of this love, it could never hope to thrive. He didn’t care how it could affect a fellow god to lose a love, but instead how Icarus would distract Apollo. The sun needed to rise and set each day. Just one mistake could be catastrophic. Poseidon would never let a human be the cause of such problem.

Then it all came together, the day Icarus had to fly. After being trapped in the labyrinth for so long, he yearned to see Apollo once again. Daedalus, his father, gave warnings to stay away from the sun. Unfortunately, they failed to reach through Icarus’ lovesick mind. So as he flew up high, he held back his fears and doubts, waiting for fate to briefly reunite them once again.

Apollo held Icarus in his arms, golden eyes searching for reason. Icarus was lost though, wondering just what newfound colors he saw glittering in those eyes. In the light of day, Icarus finally saw just what details the night hid from him. There was Apollo’s sun kissed speckled skin, the single mole beneath his left eye. Icarus melted at the little details he had missed in the moonlight.

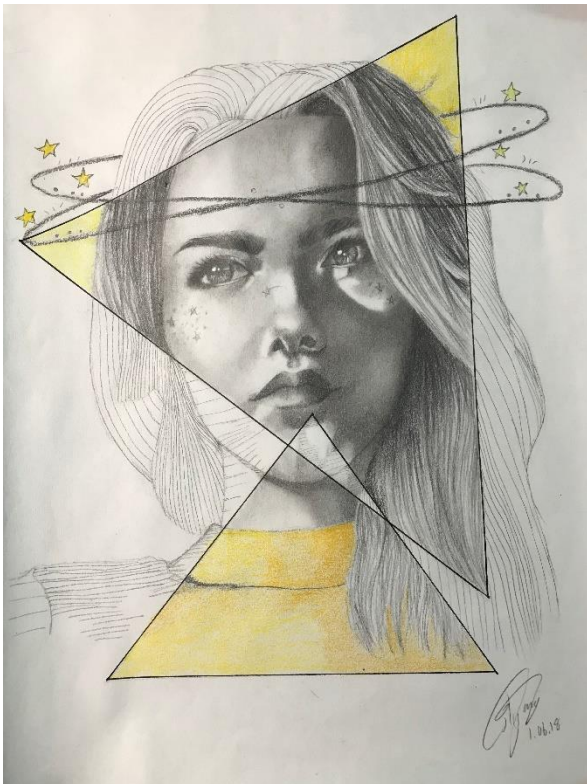
Apollo wished to hold Icarus to him forever but he felt wax cooling on his warm skin. Time was ticking, and then he heard the deep roar of the ocean itself. Icarus was oblivious blinded by love into

an irrevocable fate. In his final moments, Icarus leaned forward to bring Apollo into a kiss. It tasted like ash. The kiss was cut short by fate herself, the wax could no longer support Icarus. The sound he heard as he reached out, hoping for a savior, hurt more than the impact with the sea. Apollo screamed, reaching to catch Icarus, only to touch fingertips briefly. Waves reached up to catch the fallen boy, dragging him down to the depths. Poseidon swore not to tell; he didn’t care now that the distraction was gone. It left Apollo alone to wallow in his sadness. In his poetry.

One Smile

Reese Camlin

If you give one smile to a stranger,
That stranger will have a better day.
That day will be more sunny;
That sun will make others days brighter.
Those other people will feel happier.
That feeling will rub off on people you love;
The people you love will want be around you more.
Then, constant happiness around you,
Just with one single smile.
One smile can make the world a bit brighter.



Lily Dang

seasons of the forest

Jesulayomi Adejo

1st Place Poetry

mauve raindrops mix with dun earth,
forming a puce, viscid mud
that slips through my fingers.
solemn bluebirds croon a sorrowful requiem
for their fearless soldier, lost in the storm;
his carcass replenishes the forest.
doting dawn turns to doleful dusk.
willow trees wistfully wither away,
waving farewell to wanton wildflowers.
lily flowers lie low in cool breeze,
reminiscing of their salad days,
remembering their jaunty woodland friends.
a thousand winters wane as spring says hello.
scarlet foxes leave their pally dens
and dance with ivory rabbits.
dainty dandelions tan under the Tuscan sun.
serene grass grows as spring bids adieu
and welcomes summer with amicable arms.

Memories

Isaiah Martinez

It was going to be the best time of my
life.
I couldn't even put my excitement in
words.
I had long waited for it,
And I was ready for it to come.

I lived in the moment,
I forgot what would result in the end.
I would rather like it to last longer,
Or that I could do it again.
Although it was a wonderful time,
It couldn't last forever.

I keep those moments as memories,
And I revisit them when I think about
them,
And that's fine, because
The best moments in life
Are those that last the shortest,
But are remembered forever.

Pat!*Julia Craft*

I always go back to those nights.
 Those soft Florida nights.
 Those nights filled with rain.
 Soft, gentle rain.
 Cold, tempered rain.
 The type of rain that you see the movie stars kiss in.
 The type that clings to your eyelashes or soaks your clothes and makes them reach for your warm body.
 The type that soaks your hair and makes it frame your face in gentle caresses.
 The type of rain that sets a stiffness in your bones and a chilling cold that reaches into your soul.
 Oh, how I wish for one more moment I could go back to those soft Florida rainy nights.
 How I wish I could feel the kiss of that gentle rain once more on my cheek.
 It was a Tuesday, and I remember that it was Tuesday because I remember thinking how odd it was that it wasn't Monday.
 I longed for seclusion after spending an approximate 12 hours in the car with my younger, sleep-deprived cousins.
 Whose constant murmurs I could still hear reflecting off of every surface in the small house on the border of the small lake.
 I was on the screened in porch, not necessarily hiding, more like limiting my contact with people.
 Slumped down in a creaky wooden chair, obviously worn down with constant use and age.
 I sat in that chair, a maroon book, lying in my lap.
 Its pages open and rustling in the light breeze that has wormed its way into the porch.
 The sun sat high in the sky, or it would have been, if there weren't ashen clouds blocking my view.
 Entranced, I watched the figures dance on the page, to an imaginary beat in my head.
 Whispers echoed in my skull sung sweetly by fictional voices.
 Pat!
 Pat!
 A sound that reminded me of a leaky faucet reverberated through the stiff air.
 Small, as most things start, a whisper of patters whisked through the air.
 Slowly, gradually it got larger, louder, it became faster,
 I look up.
 Rain, cooling gentle rain
 Harsh, icy rain.
 I watch it dance in the air,
 Shimmer with life,
 Hushing life with its own sound.
 Slowly, I raise myself from the chair.
 Take two quivering steps forward and yank with all my might,
 Against the restraining confines that are the screen,
 It pulls up with a snap.
 I extend my hand out slow, like I'm reaching out to the hand of an old friend.
 Pat!



Megan Torok
Second Place Artwork

(untitled)*Rowan Angstadt**3rd Place Poetry*

dark.
 warmth.
 closeness.
 comfort.
 i am drowning and breathing all at once.
 the muffled sounds of the outside world
 barely reach my uncaring ears.
 love.
 eternity.
 safety.
 satiety.
 i have no name, for all i need is what i have.
 I curl up, ready to spend the next
 thousand years here, napping.
 but then-
 cold.
 pain.
 squeezing.
 loudness.
 the stinging burn of something foreign enters my lungs.
 a white brightness blinds me.
 I cry out as things reach out to touch me.
 strange hands and faces emerge from a blurry wall.
 but then-
 her.
 she is here to save me.
 my love, my closeness, my comfort.
 i see her and everything is okay.

Goodnight Darkness*Liz Fell*

Looking around thinking this can't be real,
 I'm lost in my head but this is how I feel.
 We said nothing in this world could keep us apart;
 You should be here and it shatters my heart.
 Days like today I just want to cry;
 You're not here with me is the reason why.
 But I pick my head up, and I keep on going,
 Walking with a different stride, always just knowing,
 That you love me, and that's what keeps my head up.
 For you're my baby, and I never want to give up.
 I want you to stay, and I can't watch you leave;
 I never really knew to keep my heart on my sleeve.
 For I know you hold it in your hands quite tight;
 You know I wish you could be with me at night.
 I know everything is going to be alright.
 To my baby: I love you, goodnight!

*Adriana Godfrey*

The Swimmer Mindset

Megan Ehrnfeldt

Every morning at 5 AM, the same alarm goes off.
The same debate happens: whether to give up and stay,
or get out of bed into the cold.
The same routine of traveling to practice,
The same feeling of resisting falling asleep behind the
wheel,
The same voices say, "Do not dive into the freezing
water."

But you are doing this for a reason.
Staring at the same black line,
Flipping at each wall
For miles on end,
Fatigue building up with each stroke,
Long, painful practices.

But for what reason?
The reward is so insignificant, pointless,
Because of the internal reward after completion of a
hard set.

Training year round for the big championship meet,
Diving in on the race, realizing this is what you trained
so hard for,
Going as fast as possible.

Kicking until your legs feel like jello,
Noticing the wall right in front of you, you bury your
head down,
Move your arms faster than ever before,
Finishing on the full stroke,
Turning around fast to see the time you spent the year
training.

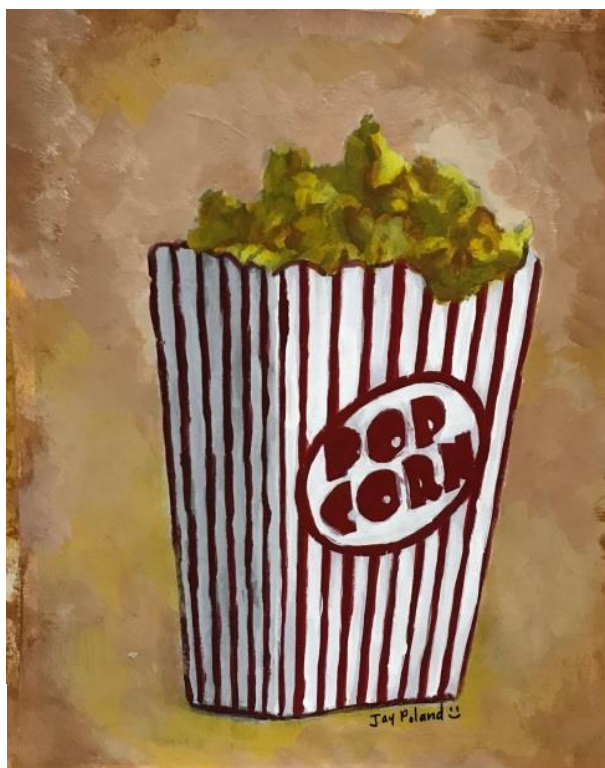
Jay Poland
3rd place Artwork

The Song

Katie Eisenhower

In the end, your real competition was not the other
swimmers, but the clock.
The clock does not slow down.
The clock does not speed up.
The clock does not care about your age, height, race,
shape.
The clock has no friends.
The clock is the mediator in this sport.
The clock is your worst enemy at times.

You swim for the pain,
For the joy,
For the friendships made,
For the knowledge you receive,
For the respect you gain,
For the coaches giving up all their time,
For the team relationship.
Most importantly, you swim for yourself as an
individual.
Only the individual will know:
The reward is beneficial to the SWIMMER.



There All Along

Sarah Gilbert

She stumbles through the darkness,
 Alone and afraid,
 Trying to find her path
 In the maze that is her life.
 She fights her battles alone,
 Tears stinging her eyes,
 For it was not always so difficult.
 Her very existence wasn't always her
 plight.
 She longs for His sunshine,
 His everlasting warmth,
 For she has been thrust into the shadows,
 With no torch to light the way.
 Suddenly His voice,
 Once muffled,
 Rings clear.
 Take off your blindfold,
 my dear;
 Come back to the light,
 The warmth,
 And the love.
 And when she takes off her blindfold,
 She realizes:
 He was there all along.

sleep

Anna Gwiazdowski

sleep:
 everyone wants it, craves it, needs it for survival;
 yet it tends to be evasive,
 always competing to be prioritized.
 sleep struggles to overtake daytime matters and earn its time.
 there is no shortage of things to do in a day, to do before sleep;
 then, there are things to agonize over at night, when it is finally
 sleep's turn.
 it fights redbulls and coffee while you study for your finals,
 wrestles with your mind as you sit in class.
 sleep is so good for you, why don't you appreciate it?
 this life is so busy, you deserve some rest.
 yet there is no way to explain to sleep, that you can't have it yet;
 you have to go to practice, finish your homework, and make
 dinner,
 and you procrastinated or overscheduled, so now it has to suffer.
 but sleep is forgiving;
 no matter how often you neglect or abuse it,
 it is there to offer relief at the end of every hard day.
 there is no feeling like falling into your nest of covers, having
 nothing to do but sleep;
 the weight of the day is momentarily lifted, and you drift into a
 temporary oasis.
 do yourself a favor:
 get some sleep.

Something Deeper

Macy Zimmerman

Love is a strange thing. No one knows the guidelines, rules, dos or don'ts. We are all floating around, doing our best to grasp onto anything resembling happiness. But what is love? Is love passion, showed off in the crowded hallways at school? Is love feeling tingles in the pits of your stomach by simply receiving a 'goodnight' text? Is it physical or emotional? Is love what movies, books, and celebrities paint it to be? Maybe it is simpler than we all think. Maybe love is being your person's North Star, something steady, unmoving, constant. Maybe love is knowing when space is needed and when it's better to ask what's wrong. Maybe love is just feeling completely comfortable in the presence of another person, no matter what you are doing. All I know for sure is that it comes in so many unique and beautiful forms. We are all so quick to judge and criticize love when nobody on this earth could possibly understand what IT is. Love is captivating and absolutely terrifying. Yet, we are all consumed by our curiosity and we fall despite the fear. I guess the struggle is in finding something or someone that is right enough, worth enough to dive right in.

Stressed

Jessica Hummel

It's fun at first.

Trying to balance life,
A million things to do,
Only a limited amount of time.
You crave it at times,
 Times of nothingness
 You need something to do
 Just something
 To do
 To erase those feelings of boredom
But once it actually begins
You can't keep control
Bouncing from one task
To the next
From one class
 To another
One assignment
 To the next assignment
Just one more practice
 Just one more game
 Just one more concert
 Just one more performance
Until I can take a break
But a break never comes
You don't find it fun anymore
 To constantly be in a whirlwind of activities
You have to keep up with it though
 To keep others from being
disappointed
 In you
Your life has to fall apart
 To keep other lives intact
You keep going
 Pushing through
 One task to the next
It'll all be over soon
Even though you know that'll never happen
But you have to keep going
Not for yourself
But because you have to be there

For everyone else

Time

Caleb Miller

Time.

They say time will tell.
Time cannot talk;
It is mute like a like a piece of paper.
It only shares its dreadful sound of seconds;
They also say to cherish those amazing
 seconds.
Seconds are just Christmas lights.
 Useless.
Time is just an endless black hole;
It ends the same way each time.
Who would need time if the world was
 endless?
Time is just a number to where the sun is.
Time is an entity you cannot give or receive.
The days should be spent however they occur.
Schedules are like dictators.
Showing how and when something is
 happening.
Time.
Time is to be spent however and wherever.
Time is now.

Hospital Reality

Kaley Kauffman

Walking through the halls of the hospital,
And looking into all the patient's rooms.
You can't help but allow sadness to creep
through your body,
When seeing all the bent up elder people,
And the children screaming in their beds.
You walk past the nurse's desk and see them
on their phones,
When they should be tending to the screaming
child or the sick old woman.
It's as if they don't care about the people,
That are hooked up to all different kinds of
machines,
And that are depending on them.
The people in pain,
Sobbing,
Screaming,
Dying.

The Home

Lillian Johns

The immense, blue home
 The shelter of an enormous family
 With rooms galore
 Pictures of beloved children that coat the chipped walls
 A setting where the fond memories are made
 From hectic family gatherings
 To relaxing movie nights
 Stuffed with unforgettable days
 An example of what the family calls their safe place
 The thing that will listen when no one will
 The one pleasant place where the doors are wide open
 Every day admired by many
 The magnificent view of the local hills
 Massive trees, lush greenery, and an assortment of animals
 Sitting on a hill
 Where it is delightful and bright
 There is no place like this home



Macy Zimmerman

Honorable Mention



Abigail Bentz

Potential

Daniel Koch

I sit and wait for the day when I can spread my wings
 and fly.
 For I know not what lies beyond the skies that tie me to
 the ground.
 What can be found could be a glorious world of light,
 beyond my wildest dreams.
 This would be filled with treasures and jewels that
 gleam.
 Alas, I am bound to this mortal plane, a world that keeps
 spinning all the same.
 I wish there be some way that I can awake what lives
 within me,
 The spirit that I know when set free can be something
 more than I've ever known before.
 I am more than I am aware of, more than I have shown,
 If I truly push myself to my limits, I can reach through
 the clouds to a new home.
 Where that may be, I know not,
 But simply knowing my potential has me giddy to the
 thought.
 So I stay high off of life, I shoot for the moon
 Knowing that what I strive for is upon me soon.

Be You

Sara Motz

I've learned the hard way,
That to start off acting like someone else,

Lying,

Pretending,

Changing,

Will ruin everything wonderful

That is to come.

Being yourself

Will provide

Satisfaction,

Friendships,

Love,

Laughter.

Stretch your legs and run.

Be free.

Sing at the top of your lungs.

Be proud.

Be true to yourself.

Be creative.

Be breathtaking.

Be awe-inspiring.

Be Magnificent.

Be Wonderful.

Be Stunning.

Be Amazing.

Be you.

Conform

Mara Nagle

We're told all our lives,
"Follow these directions,
Do this work as we say,
And you'll get a good grade."

My default zone is to say,
"What do you want me to do to get a good
grade?"

Cause that's what we want, right?

We want a good grade

Which goes on our transcripts,

So we can get in a good college.

But we're not all the same.

We enjoy different things,

We are gifted at different things.

So why are we told to conform to this world,

To this education system?

Why can't we be open to pursue our
passions,

Without worrying about conforming just to
get a good grade.

Why can't we do projects the way we want
to?

Why can't the art kids make art projects in
math?

Why can't the tech kids make a presentation
for projects in biology?

Society has taught us to all be the same,

To be the same blah beige,

To do the same blah beige projects.

So break the status quo:

Make an art project in math,

Make a presentation in biology.

You do you.

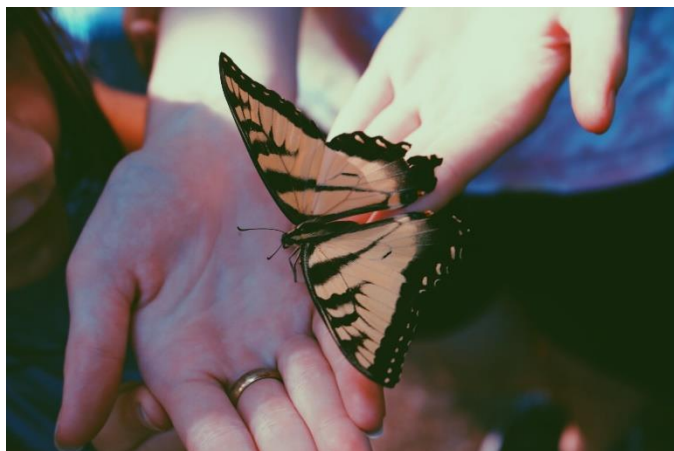
Don't let yourself conform to the world,

Let the world conform to you.

She

Elizabeth Valeriano

Who is She?
 I don't know
 what is She?
 She is made of
 Butterfly lights and Acrylic paint
 Love like Coffee
 Bitter to Sweet
 Sushi on Rainy days
 when even rice blanketed fish can swim again
 Sunflowers swerving to see
 a Sunny savior
 a Burning Red Soul only calmed by her Purple Heart
 Ink covered fingers mindlessly blemishing
 the spirits of all who walk within
 her r e a c h
 Tea bags leaving stains on Messy notes
 like an artist
 lets colors Attack the barren White Paper
 smells of Wet Plants, fresh pulled Toffee, abused Highlighter
 loud Punk music with a Classical undertone
 Overture Cannons blare in the distance
 a Smile like a faulty Light
 Bright yet difficult to return when off
 the constant Spark of life unable to be
 diminished
 Never
 have I met a girl
 like Her
 and I will
 Never
 find Her again.



Lily Whitmoyer
1st Place Photography

Forgotten

Riley Smith

Another candle has its flame taken by the ominous wind.
 Another light has faded into nothingness.
 Now there is only an ember
 Drifting away in the fate-driven wind.
 A lake will drown its reminisce.
 A storm will consume its existence.
 The wind did not take this ember to annihilation, however,

As it did the others.
 For now, there is a glimmer of hope.
 The wind had only now reached its journey's end.
 The frail ember now rests in a barren grassland.
 And although the candle no longer burns,
 The inferno the ember created
 Will never be forgotten.

Addison Angstadt
Honorable Mention

Jared

Elliot Davila

I remember your birthday party more than I remember you.
I remember you invited everyone in our third-grade class,
and I remember that I was invited to a birthday party.
I remember begging my mother to go,
anxiously counting down the days.

I remember being one of two girls in a sea of boys, yet
somehow,
I remember feeling at home.
I remember being introduced to the “boy’s games”,
spinning tops with pull-strings,
pushing too many buttons on video games
that conducted the lives of small men.
I remember winning and losing to your friends
whose faces never stuck in my brain
but whose laughs did.

I remember the treehouse that touched the sky,
and I remember the fear of climbing so high.
You coaxed me up, you know,
childhood peer pressure pulling me up like a rope,
“Don’t look down!”
“Don’t look down!”
I remember huddling inside,
crammed between boys telling jokes,
shaking the walls,
testing the balance.
I remember our promise to talk at school tomorrow,
I remember thinking it was stupid,
of course we would.

But one day, you disappeared without a trace,
and with you, went my memory of your face,
and your smile,
and your video games.
I wonder if you lost your memory of your party in the trade.

Kara Faulk
2nd Place Photography

A Torn Society

Jillian Phillips

We feel we need to please everyone but ourselves.
You are only allowed to be skinny and beautiful
No blemishes, no marks, no scars
Perfect hair, perfect body, perfect personality.
Such a person doesn’t exist, but they don’t care.
They push you until your breaking point,
Crying because you will never look the way they want
Crying because you’re not good enough for their
standards.

But, you are unique, incredible, magnificent.
You are all these things, and I wish I could make you
believe

Because you think I am lying.
But, sadly society is the one doing the deceiving.



Soccer

Johnathan Castellon-Palacio

It is known as the beautiful game
 Running, kicking, slide tackling, red cards, scoring, all that
 Waiting for the whistle to blow like a predator ready to pounce on its prey.
 The game starts with the mindset being to win the game.
 After a first half of hard defense and attacking offense
 The game is tied at 0-0
 All the focus is to win the game
 Whistle blows to start the most important minutes of the game
 Minutes feel like seconds and the game is almost over
 The game is still tied 0-0
 Out of nowhere 1 minute is left.
 It is time to make the final push to the net
 The midfielder sends a bullet of a pass to the forward as he carries it up the field
 30 seconds left in regulation
 The forward is near the 18 with only a defender and the goalie left.
 As he makes a move on the defender and gets by him with only the goalie in his eyes,
 He takes the shot with the strength of bull as it rips through the net
 As the crowd goes wild as what might be easily the game winner.
 The whistle blows as the opposing team has 10 seconds
 But the 3 whistles blow as the game is over after what might be an incredible victory
 And after all, this is the beautiful game.



*Timothy Horrell
 Honorable Mention*

Black Ink Spread Across a Lifetime

Tori Jamison

An open mind is a book being written
 Changed and edited time after time
 Information obtained and added
 Wrinkles in the brain
 Black ink spread across a lifetime.

A smooth page withered in age
 Filling in the empty space
 Learning new things
 Imagination running wild
 Until the sun sets
 Another worn cover is met
 Or a black shroud.

The New Season Feeling

Bryce Hill

It is the third week of March,
and the weather is crisp and chilly.

For the first time in five months,
you are out here in this very familiar place.

You have been here in this situation ever since you were
six years old,

But every year the same feelings,
and excitement come back.

The smells make you tingle inside with anticipation for
this day,

You pick your partner to stretch out your arm with,
The sound of the ball hitting the web of the glove was a
sound you missed so dearly.

After warming up,
you head off to the batting cage to get in a few swings,

The sound of the ball cracking off your barrel was so
soothing to hear,

The team is sitting on the bench,

Enjoying the newly opened boxes of sunflower seeds,
and big-league chew bubble gum,

All the talk is about who is going to be the first one to
get a base hit.

Your coach calls the team in to give a speech,

He tells the team that this might be the most important
game of the year,

And that it is important to start the year off on a good
note.

He then announces the starting lineup for the game,

The team then breaks down the speech, Panthers on 3,
...1...2...3 Panthers,

The chant's echo sounds like a roar through the air.

The starters jog quickly to their positions and the pitcher
takes the mound,

You are so ready for today's game and it is a new season.
It is time for baseball season.

Nicollas Bernhart

Honorable Mention



Basketball

Leonard Bastein-Vilburn

D-FENCE!! BOOM, BOOM!! D-FENCE!! DOOM, DOOM!!

The energy consumes thee who steps on the court hooper worthy.

Crowd given courage

The baller life is crazy.

I can hoop at night or even daily.

And I only save daily for last call; all that's been is night games lately.

A sport of such creations

Been around for generations .

19 feet for the triple,

Lose balls to us are some skittles.

Like Kyrie Irving I can dribble.

A speed like mine reminds minds of a transit.

If I get a steal I'm a bandit

Because you'll never catch up when I'm sprinting with intentions

To get the ball in the basket.

To be claimed a threat in the paint, you need penetration.

I dance a little with hesitation.

Who can guard me? Don't try it or you'll be sorry.

Elevation way

Arose to grab the boards, a Stat sheet stuffer at its finest

The clock is running out, let's run a pick and roll!

Refs with another bad call-- are you kidding me!?

Lose one call, one will be returned in symmetry.

The amount of tricks will keep you on your toes quite literally.

A vet at defense takes the ball away from you vigorously.

If you're hungry I have some chips I like to flaunt to prove my victories.

Repeat

Emily Zaharia

Drop.

Drop.

Drop.

Pause.

Repeat.

Water.

Trickling.

Splash.

Little droplets of

Dome-shaped crystal

Balls

Reflect the world

Stretch.

Break.

Little crystals

Bounce to the ground

Leap.

Flatten and break

Again

In a repeated

Pattern

Of intricate fractals

Slide through the mountains
to the hole

Down the tunnel of

Darkness

Their brothers follow from

Above

To begin the process

Once again

Drop.

Drop.

Drop.

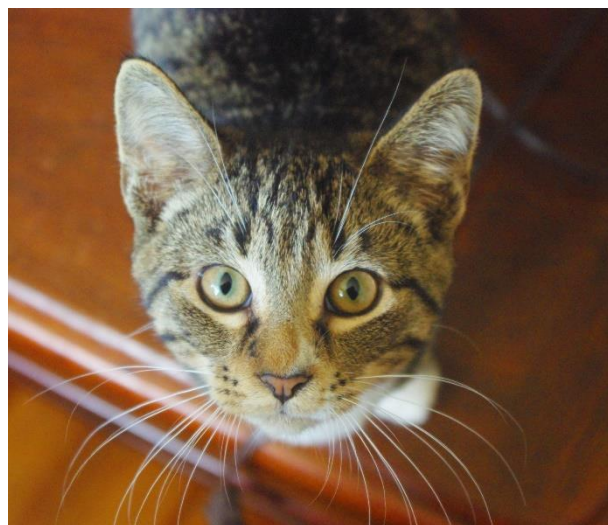
Pause.

Repeat.

Nature's Purest Form

Reagan Rittenhouse

As I step across the pavement
drawing a crisp air into my lungs,
A gentle whisper of a breeze brushes my cheek.
I see the shamrock grass
swaying to the left in perfect rows.
My breath, the steady movement of the grass
My heartbeat, the steady beat of the earth.
As I peer across the slate-gray pavement,
my eyes land on the lake.
The sun glistens off the perfectly rippled water,
causing the water birds to rise up and fall back down.
I wonder what it is like to be that close
to the true embodiment of nature.
But I am so close,
Clouds above me shift from fluffy and white to a dark gray.
Just like most things, nature is forever changing
Simple white clouds changing so quickly,
An evil cascade accompanied by thunder and lightning
came from a sky that was once so calm and beautiful
Nature, so complex yet so beautifully simplistic.



Kaley Kauffman
3rd Place Photography

Birds

Isaiah Martinez
2nd Place Poetry

I worry, will I
make it through? I hear
an owl whispering to me, It is
speaking to me, *ringing*
endlessly in my ears. I try
to escape, but they come
faster, almost like a fiend they
come forth. The crows draw near. They
caw and cry with a deafening laughter.
Ringing endlessly in my ears, *ringing end-*
lessly in my ears. The parrot cackles and tells
my secret. It echos to the world, for all to hear. To
the mockingbirds amuse, They ridicule and jeer. Let
it end, make it stop. They blibber and blabber, They
Jibber and jabber. The goose keeps hollering of all
sorts of matter. I run. I cry. I keep trying to fly. I pick
up my feet, and reach up for the sky. A rooster calls
my name, and pulls me out of the clouds, I watch
my success fall from my eye. I let out my nightingale,
My call didn't fail. My mother hen warded me,
she scolded and she
sailed, and with her
sweet-soft voice,
she sang sweetly
to me. *Ringling end-*
lessly in my ears.

Sunny Rain*Isaiah Martinez*

Rain (top to bottom)
 It is now raining.
 I did not wish that
 the sun will come back, shining in the sky.
 I'm sure that no one hopes
 the rain will leave.
 I do wish that
 The bright hot sun will disappear.
 It is horrible for anyone to dream that
 The rain will cease and leave.
 I plead and I hope
 They want the sun to dissipate;
 To go away forever because
 I do not want the sun.
 There are raindrops falling from the sky.
 I don't think that anyone likes that
 Scorching sun that warms us all.
 I like the relaxing feeling of the
 Rain drizzling down onto the earth.
 I hate and do not like that
 The sun is going to stay.
 I am disturbed and I'm not sure that
 The rain is coming back.
 I despise that
 It is now sunny.
 Sunny (bottom to top)

Replay*Dylan Small*

Startled from slumber by persistent clangs

 Another day, another foe

 Another day, another friendship

 Another day, another mistake

 Another day, another success

 Another day, another obstacle

 Another day, another opportunity

 Another day, another failure

 Another day, another chance

 Another day, another death

 Another day, another rebirth

 Morning sun preparing me to begin again.

She Doesn't Cry Often*Cassidy Rittenhouse**Honorable Mention*

She doesn't cry often,
 But once she starts it never seems to end.
 She thinks of the moths that flutter
 By the yellow lit lanterns
 Outside her red and grey brick house
 On lonely nights that bite with frigid cold air
 And the ivy weeds that peek through cracks and splits
 Of sandpaper sidewalks.

 She thinks about golden green apples
 That turn golden brown when they're dropped
 And how roses get snipped like string
 Then wilt to shriveled nothing for
 A moment of pleasure
 And how she only has so few moments to spare
 And some are spent crying.

You Only Turn Fifteen Once

Madison Hess

We take the time in life
To lavishly celebrate everything but ourselves...

A year gone by and another to come
Boxes of chocolates and red roses, given when the heart chords are strum
Leprechauns and pots of gold
Hunts for hidden eggs and visits from *the* bunny, or so we are told.
Picnics under the sun and fireworks that paint the night sky
Tricks and treats and bellyaches, oh my!
Plate after plate of food until it all disappears
Santa, candy canes, and reindeers.

All these topics celebrated with grand parties galore
But the list forgot just one
The holiday meant for ourselves
Where we only get a simple cake
Off of Walmart's shelves.

Do not fret
All hopes are not lost,
But please do remember
That you only turn fifteen once.



Rowan Angstadt



Cassidy Noll

Scream

Ella Jenkins

Blossoming flowers sway to the music of the wind
Her golden locks caress the soft tufts of grass
Young birds chirp in their neat nest of gnarled twigs
A lone tear escapes her tightly closed eye
The grey of the sky coalesces with the deathly pallor of the clouds
Her screams reverberate throughout the barren countryside
The salty drop winds its way down her pale face and lands in the
forgiving earth, fostering new growth.

The Man at the Bottom of My Driveway

Hadley Pontician

There was a man standing at the bottom of my driveway.

Just standing.

I wasn't alarmed, this wasn't the first time he had been there. He came every once and awhile, and I paid him no mind. At first, I was curious about the man, but then, it just became another part of my life. Occasionally I waved to the man, and he would wave back, but that was all, and I would go inside my house.

Today was different.

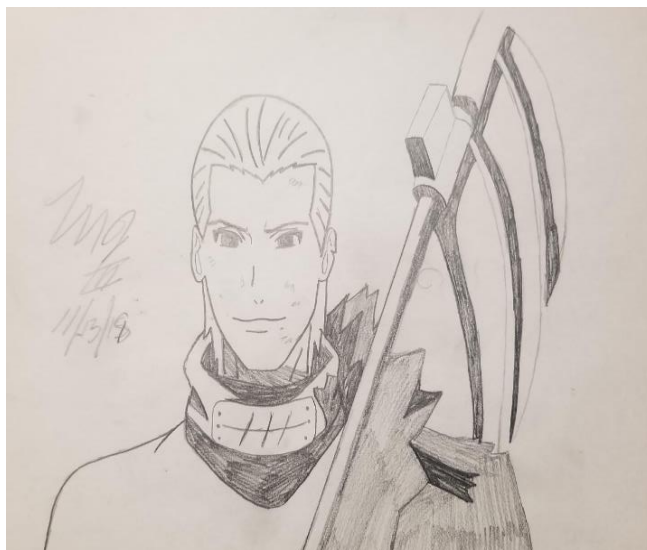
I took a step towards the man, down my driveway. I don't know why, but I just felt the need to. I waved, and he waved back.

I took another step.

The man beckoned me farther down my driveway, and so, I followed his hand, walking forward. He then spoke to me. This was the first time I had heard his voice. It was soft, but dark like it could protect me from the world, and keep me warm from the cold. I couldn't make out his words, but his voice entranced me to keep going farther down the driveway. I wondered why I didn't just go back inside, I could wrap myself in a warm, fluffy blanket on a couch and watch a movie with my dog snuggled up next to me. The night was cold, and unknown sounds played at my ears, but so did the man's voice. That warm, mysterious voice, from a warm, mysterious man. I didn't know his personality, but I could feel the warmth radiating off of him, drawing me closer.

I looked behind me, and the driveway seemed to have grown longer, and my house farther away. When I turned back, the man was still talking, still beckoning me closer, protecting me from the night. My house no longer reminded me of warmth, the windows looked foreboding, not letting out a slimmer of light. It had become part of the night. The man was my only option of warmth, and I did not mind it. I was very close to the man, only a few more steps and I would reach him, the man at the bottom of my driveway. He held out his hand, waiting for me to grasp it with a small smile playing at his lips. I noticed his eyes, red as the blood moon, his smile more like a dangerous smirk. He still held out his hand to me. I took it

And fell into the beautiful abyss.



Mark Jones